

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Act Collaborative Program Science Subcommittee (SSc)

**01 February 2005 Meeting, 9:00 – 11:30 PM
USFWS Osuna Office Conference Room, Albuquerque, NM**

Proposed Agenda for 01 February 2005 Meeting

- Review and approval of notes from the previous SSc meetings
- Brief updates:
 - PMSc, InSC, and/or EC
 - PAP
 - Silvery minnow wetted refuge habitat workgroup meeting schedule?
 - FY 2005 Program proposal reviews
- Problems/Priorities:
 - Discussion of Perennial Pools Concept Paper
 - Data and reports from previous MRG studies for Program database
 - Power analysis of the RGSM catch data
- Proposed agenda for next meeting
 - Agenda for the 1 March meeting: FWS – silvery minnow augmentation and Craig Boroughs – Development of sediment plugs along the Tiffany Junction Reach

Review and Approval of Notes from the Previous SSc Meeting

- Final review of the notes from the previous four SSc meetings was deferred until the next meeting of the SSc.

PMSc, InSC, and/or EC Update

- Peter David reported that previous meetings of these groups focused on budget issue related to the long-term plan and cost-sharing between the federal and non-federal signatories.
- Discussion of potential reorganization options for the Program's subcommittee system is progressing; reorganization could help expedite the Programs decision process and help to enhance the creativity of technical solutions generated by the Program.
- During the general discussion, several SSc members brought up concerns regarding "it is not if, but when" certain BO conditions would not be met, particularly regarding the BO's water supply requirements. Members generally agreed with the thought that proactive efforts on part of the Program to prepare for that time would increase the flexibility and improve options for improving any potential future BO or modification of the existing BO. Several members expressed interest in starting work to establish optional or alternative "proactive mitigation measures" to have in place to lessen potential biological and societal impacts at that time.

Project Advisory Panel (PAP) Draft Report

- The draft report from the PAP report has been distributed to the SSc members.
- Peter David highlighted that the report was supportive of the Program and offered instructive guidance for the Program; it stressed needs for refuge habitats and efforts to augment silvery minnow populations.
- The SSc will not attempt to produce a collaborative review of this report, instead signatory members have the opportunity to provide individual comments on the report to Pete and the PAP.
- Concern was expressed that the PAP appeared to place little consideration on water quality issues.

Problems/Priorities: wetted refuge habitat for silvery minnows

- Much of the meeting was again devoted to consideration of the wetted refuge habitat concept for silvery minnows.
- Dave Propst reported that NMDGF had conducted a short study of water quality in drying pools, and they found that ammonia concentrations and water temperature increased through the day, while dissolved oxygen concentrations decreased. Over a period of several days salinity also typically increased as pool depth decreased.
- Water quality changes relate to pools size, drying rates, water flow, etc.; additional monitoring is needed to better quantify these relationships.
- Future studies should also include assessment of fish health.
- Who should do this monitoring? Add staff to the rescue crew? Form new crews? Add duties to the River Eyes Program? A Feb 3 meeting on River Eyes may shed light on this issue. Would additional funding be available from signatories to address these needs?
- Predator issues also need to be assessed.
- Concern was expressed that only silvery minnows are the focus of rescue efforts, other native species are also affected by channel drying. Should additional rescue efforts be placed by, e.g., NMDGF on the rescue of other fish native species?
- Detailed discussion focused on options to allow 17 cfs of flow past the San Acacia Diversion; such flow is projected to maintain a wetted habitat to the 9-mile Outflow; flows from that outflow could maintain another 2- to 3-miles of wetted habitat.
- Mike Marcus was requested to incorporate the major points from the day's discussion into the refuge habitat concept paper.

Problems/Priorities: Program/MRG datasets

- Mike Marcus reminded the SSc that he had distributed Nic Medley's compilation of projects that could be included in a program database for historic activities and/or raw data, which Mike expanded to include information for flycatchers.
- The SSc agreed to defer additional consideration of this information until the next meeting.

Problems/Priorities: Silvery minnow population estimations and power analysis

- After a brief discussion, it was concluded by consensus that the planned discussion of the power analysis report completed by SWCA for ISC was not needed.
- Several members stated that the principal conclusions from that report had already been incorporated into the sample program conducted by Steve Platania since 2003.
- Assertions were made that it is unlikely that reasonable estimates of the silvery minnow population size in the MRG can be generated and it is unlikely that specific benefits from the Program affecting these size can be measured. There was no stated disagreement.

Proposed Agenda for 15 February 2005 SSc Meeting, 9:00 AM, FWS on Osuna in Albuquerque:

- Review and approval of notes from the previous SSc meetings
- Brief updates:
 - PMSc, InSC, and/or EC
 - FY 2005 Program proposal reviews – future meeting needs
 - PAP draft report comments
 - Long-term plan SSc budget update
- Problems/Priorities:
 - Final discussion of Perennial Pools concept paper
 - Silvery minnow wetted refuge habitat workgroup meeting schedule? Needed?
 - Data and reports from previous MRG studies for database
- Reclamation silvery minnow reports – egg habitat identification, constructed nursery habitat design, and fish distribution in a steep riffle
- Proposed agenda for next meeting
 - Agenda for the 1 March meeting: FWS – silvery minnow augmentation and Craig Boroughs – Development of sediment plugs along the Tiffany Junction Reach

Science Subcommittee
01 February 2005 Meeting Attendees

NAME	AFFILIATION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
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